

Message Text

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17

ACTION NEA-10

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 IO-10

DHA-02 ORM-02 EB-07 COME-00 CU-04 TRSE-00 AID-05

EUR-12 OES-05 INT-05 FEA-01 AGR-10 /130 W

----- 006312

R 140715Z NOV 75

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0638

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

UNCLAS LAHORE 1295

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS : PINT, ECON, PK

SUBJECT : BHUTTO PRESS CONFERENCE IN LAHORE - DOMESTIC THEMES

REFERENCE : ISLAMABAD 10494

1. SUMMARY: IN ADDITION TO POINTS PRIMIN BHUTTO MADE ON SUBCONTINENTAL RELATIONS IN NOVEMBER 11 PRESS CONFERENCE AT LAHORE (REPORTED REFTEL), HE TOUCHED ON NUMBER OF DOMESTIC ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL MATTERS RANGING FROM FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN TO REORGANIZATION OF PAKISTAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP). WHILE COVERING LITTLE NEW GROUND, PRIMIN CONTINUED MAINTAIN FORWARD-LOOKING POSTURE ON NATIONAL ISSUES FOLLOWING ON ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMPORTANT NEW LAND REVENUE REFORMS NOVEMBER 10. END SUMMARY

2. PRIMIN DEVOTED CONSIDERABLE PORTION OF LAHORE PRESS CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 11 TO ECONOMIC ISSUES. PRINCIPAL ITEM WAS FOURTH FIVE-YEAR PLAN, WHICH HE DECLARED WOULD BE LAUNCHED BY DECEMBER 1976. PRIMIN EXPLAINED HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO GIVE UNDIVIDED ATTENTION TO DRAFTING PLAN BECAUSE OF ITS "MULTIFARIOUS UNCLASSIFIED

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RESPONSIBILITIES" AND PREOCCUPATION WITH

"CONSTITUTION-MAKING AND OTHER VITAL MATTERS", BUT HE CLAIMED THAT WORLD-WIDE ECONOMIC "DEPRESSION" AND IMPACT OF OIL PRICE INCREASES WOULD HAVE UPSET PLAN CALCULATIONS ANYWAY, AS HAPPENED IN INDIA AND MANY EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. IN ABSENCE OF FIVE-YEAR PLAN SINCE 1970, HE NOTED THAT ANNUAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS HAD GIVEN RISE TO MANY "GIGANTIC" PROJECTS SUCH AS KARACHI STEEL MILL ESTIMATED TO COST RS. 1,600 CRORES.

3. ASKED IF GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO GIVE RELIEF TO URBAN DWELLERS SIMILAR TO THAT JUST GRANTED TO SMALL FARMERS EXEMPTING THEM FROM PAYMENT OF LAND REVENUES AND OTHER CESSSES, BHUTTO REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT INCOME TAX EXEMPTION LIMIT HAD ALREADY BEEN RAISED FROM RS. 6,000 TO RS. 12,000, WHICH SHOULD PROVIDE SUBSTANTIAL RELIEF, ESPECIALLY IN CITIES. FURTHER PROPOSALS FOR REFORM, HE NOTED, MIGHT BE CONSIDERED IN UPCOMING BUDGET SESSION OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE SAID HE WAS AWARE OF PRICE SPIRAL AND WOULD TAKE MEASURES TO CHECK IT AFTER RECEIVING RECOMMENDATIONS OF PRICE COMMISSION.

4. BHUTTO NOTED HE WOULD CONTINUE MAINTAINING CONTACT WITH PEOPLE BY HOLDING OPEN MEETINGS FROM TIME TO TIME. PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS, HE REPORTEDLY SAID, COULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT THROUGH PEOPLE FOR THEIR PERFORMANCE, AND THAT IT WAS NOT INFRINGEMENT OF PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY FOR HIM TO GIVE THEM GUIDANCE OR ASK THEM TO MEET DEVELOPMENT TARGETS. REPLYING TO QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBLE LOSS OF PROVINCIAL INCOME DUE TO NEW REVENUE REFORMS, PRIMIN SAID FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD EXTEND WHATEVER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE WAS NECESSARY TO MAKE UP DIFFERENCE.

5. QUESTIONED IF GOVERNMENT WOULD BE ABLE TO HOLD FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS, BHUTTO SAID GENERAL ELECTIONS WOULD BE HELD BEFORE DATE PROVIDED BY CONSTITUTION AND ALL ARRANGEMENTS WOULD BE MADE TO INSURE IMPARTIALITY. IN RESPONSE TO QUERY ABOUT DELAYS IN ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, HE REPORTEDLY REPLIED THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD SOON BE MADE ABOUT IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS OF LAW REFORMS

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COMMISSION. RE FREEDOM OF PRESS, PRIMIN INDICATED HE WAS PREPARED TO HOLD DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF COUNCIL OF NEWSPAPER EDITORS CONFERENCE AND PAKISTAN FEDERAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS, AND WOULD BE WILLING TO GRANT "ALL FREEDOM TO PRESS IF JOURNALISTS WERE PREPARED TO SAY WHAT PENALTIES SHOULD BE GIVEN TO THOSE WHO VIOLATE THEIR OWN CODE OF ETHICS" (ACCORDING PRESS ACCOUNT).

6. REFERRING TO EARLIER MEETING WITH PRESIDENTS AND SECRETARIES OF LOCAL PPP UNITS, PRIMIN REPORTEDLY SAID PARTY RE-ORGANIZATION "WILL BE COMPLETED BEFORE END OF THIS YEAR." HE NOTED THAT CONVENTIONS MIGHT BE CALLED AT PROVINCIAL LEVEL BEFORE REORGANIZATION FULLY CARRIED OUT. HE STRESSED THAT PPP WAS PROGRESSIVE AND, UNLIKE "REACTIONARY PARTIES", ADHERED TO ITS MANIFESTO. PRIMIN POINTED OUT ONLY A "REVOLUTIONARY PARTY" LIKE PPP COULD BRING ABOUT CHANGES IN SOCIETY. HE ADDED THAT SOME PEOPLE JOINED OUTDATED ORGANIZATIONS "NOT TO REVIVE BUT TO DESTROY THEM."

7. CONGEN PREPARING SEPARATE ASSESSMENT ON RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN PUNJAB AND EFFECT THEREON OF GOVERNMENT'S LATEST DECISIONS AND POLICY PRONOUNCEMENTS.
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